California Dropout Research Project

An Affiliated Project of the University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute

UC Santa Barbara | Gevirtz Graduate School of Education

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ONE HUNDRED CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOLS
ACCOUNT FOR MORE THAN 40 PERCENT OF THE STATE'S DROPOUTS
State Data Shows Charter and Alternative High Schools Account for
Disproportionate Number of Dropouts

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. – A study released today indicates that a relatively small group of California schools account for a significant number of high school dropouts. Based on data from the California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS), the study conducted by the California Dropout Research Project (CDRP) shows that just 100 high schools--out of 2,462 high schools in California--account for more than 40 percent of the state's dropouts.

"While the dropout crisis is systemic, this latest research tells us that we don't need to fix every school to begin addressing the dropout crisis," said Russell W. Rumberger, UCSB professor of education and director of CDRP. "We need to focus our energy and resources on finding solutions to improve the schools and school districts with the highest number of dropouts. Even in challenging budget times, there are immediate and cost-effective steps we can take to turn the tide."

The California State Department of Education collects data for CBEDS from all 2,462 public high schools. CDRP has taken the CBEDS data, and for the first time, enabled it to be sorted in a user-friendly way by county, district, school, enrollment, number of dropouts and dropout rates. In addition, CDRP has classified the data by type of school: "traditional" schools --regular comprehensive high schools--and "non-traditional" schools, which include charter and alternative schools. The entire list of schools is available at http://www.lmri.ucsb.edu/dropouts/sb7table.php.

Highlights from CDRP Statistical Brief 7, entitled *Which California High Schools Have the Most Dropouts* (http://www.lmri.ucsb.edu/dropouts/*)* include:

- Just 100 California high schools--4 percent of high schools and enrolling 11 percent of all students--account for more than 40 percent of all California dropouts.

- Twenty-five California high schools--1 percent of high schools--account for 21 percent of the state's dropouts (See page three of this press release for the list of these 25 schools).

- The average individual school dropout rate in California is 3.5 percent. More than half of California high schools have dropout percentages less than or equal to the state average.

- Seventy-three high schools have dropout rates greater than 50 percent.

- Six-hundred sixty-two schools (27 percent), report zero dropouts. Non-traditional schools account for a majority of these zero dropout schools.

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- Non-traditional high schools--which include charter and alternative schools--account for a disproportionate number of dropouts:
  - Of the 10 schools with the highest number of dropouts, seven are charter, two are alternative and one is a traditional high school.
  - Of the 100 schools with the highest number of dropouts, 42 are non-traditional.
  - Seventy-three of the 74 schools with dropout rates above 50 percent are non-traditional schools.
  - Non-traditional schools enroll 12 percent of California's high school students and account for 50 percent of all California's dropouts.

"Many alternative schools serve disadvantaged students who are often not well served in traditional high schools, so school dropout rates, by themselves, do not reveal whether a school is effective or ineffective in improving the likelihood that students will graduate," noted Rumberger. "As with traditional public high schools, there are charter and alternative schools that are doing a great job and are models of innovation and others that are not," added Rumberger.

A companion report also released today by CDRP, Statistical Brief 8, analyzes the CBEDS data by school district. The data show that the proportion of students that districts enroll in non-traditional high schools varies greatly: 196 districts enroll 6 percent or fewer of their students in non-traditional schools, while 42 districts enroll more than 17 percent of the students in non-traditional schools. Districts with more students enrolled in non-traditional schools have higher *district* dropout rates.

Simply as a function of its size, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) has the highest number of dropouts in the state, with 10,588 dropouts (15 percent of the state total). However, LAUSD's overall dropout rate is five percent, ranking them 75th among the 531 school districts enrolling ninth through twelfth graders. A list of all California school districts is available at http://www.lmri.ucsb.edu/dropouts/sb8table.php.

The findings are the latest in a series of 15 policy and statistical briefs on California's dropouts conducted by CDRP, a research program based at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Later this month, the CDRP policy committee--composed of researchers, policymakers and educators--will release a state policy agenda identifying short-term and long-term recommendations for improving California's high school graduation rate.

CDRP is funded by $850,000 in grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Walter S. Johnson Foundation. For more information about CDRP, including copies of the complete series of the Project's research, please visit the CDRP website at: http://www.lmri.ucsb.edu/dropouts/.

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California Schools with the Most Dropouts*

	County	District	School Name	Type	Enrollment	Dropouts	Dropout Rate
1	Nevada	Nevada County Office of Education	Muir Charter	Charter	1,245	1856	149.1%**
2	San Diego	Vista Unified	SIATech	Charter	911	1505	165.2%**
3	Los Angeles	Baldwin Park Unified	Opportunities for Learning - Baldwin Park	Charter	2,479	1031	41.6%
4	Orange	Orange County Department of ED	Access County Community	Alternative	4,395	775	17.6%
5	Los Angeles	Los Angeles Unified	City of Angels	Alternative	1,789	763	42.7%
6	San Bernardino	Upland Unified	Options for Youth - Upland	Charter	1,493	730	48.9%
7	Los Angeles	Burbank Unified	Options for Youth-Burbank Charter	Charter	1,242	597	48.1%
8	San Bernardino	Victor Valley Union High	Options for Youth-Victorville Charter	Charter	1,380	588	42.6%
9	Madera	Madera Unified	Madera High North	Regular	4,270	539	12.6%
10	Santa Clara	East Side Union High	Escuela Popular/Center for Training and Careers, F	Charter	0	536	**
11	Los Angeles	Long Beach Unified	Educational Partnership High	Alternative	879	525	59.7%
12	Los Angeles	Los Angeles County Office of Education	Los Angeles County Opportunity	Alternative	526	507	96.4%
13	Los Angeles	Los Angeles Unified	Belmont Senior High	Regular	5,336	452	8.5%
14	Los Angeles	Baldwin Park Unified	Baldwin Park High	Regular	2,341	434	18.5%
15	San Joaquin	Lodi Unified	Tokay High	Regular	2,456	428	17.4%
16	Los Angeles	Los Angeles Unified	John C. Fremont Senior High	Regular	4,615	416	9.0%
17	Kern	Kern County Office of Education	Kern County Community	Alternative	1,114	391	35.1%
18	Los Angeles	Los Angeles Unified	Los Angeles Senior High	Regular	4,661	380	8.2%
19	Sacramento	San Juan Unified	Options for Youth-San Juan	Charter	625	379	60.6%
20	Los Angeles	Baldwin Park Unified	Sierra Vista High	Regular	2,104	350	16.6%
21	Los Angeles	Los Angeles Unified	Thomas Jefferson Senior High	Regular	2,997	327	10.9%
22	Los Angeles	Los Angeles Unified	Huntington Park Senior High	Regular	4,598	327	7.1%
23	Riverside	Moreno Valley Unified	March Mountain High	Alternative	690	310	44.9%
24	Riverside	Alvord Unified	Norte Vista High	Regular	2,428	301	12.4%
25	Los Angeles	San Gabriel Unified	Options for Youth San Gabriel	Charter	508	284	55.9%

*Based on California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) data retrieved on October 7, 2007, and the California Department of Education Academic Performance Index (API) data files retrieved on December 3, 2007.

**Due to the state's method of collecting and reporting enrollment data, six schools have dropout rates of 100 percent or more. The state collects enrollment data only once at the beginning of the year, but collects dropout data over the course of the entire year. Therefore, a student who enters a school after the enrollment data is collected is not counted as being enrolled, but can be counted as a dropout. Some schools did not report enrollment numbers but reported dropout numbers, thus a dropout rate can't be calculated.